

Advent Devotional Guide



Lake Community Church

Dedicated to
Pastor Terry Herron
Mrs. Sandra Carlisle

LCC Advent Devotional

Forward

Advent is the time of year in which Christians prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament gives us numerous prophecies about the coming or birth of the Messiah. The most popular prophecy giving us this great promise is found in Isaiah 7:14,

"Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

Also the prophet Micah tells us where the Messiah would be born in Micah 5:2,

*"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
Are not the least among the rulers of Judah;
For out of you shall come a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel."*

Jesus is the personal fulfillment of over 300 prophecies. He is the light of God that was promised and came into the world. The celebration of Advent or better said the celebration of His coming is the celebration of God's love for all of humanity.

Finally, the celebration of his coming also prepares our hearts for his second coming.

The Revelation 1:7 tells us,

"Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen."

Pastor Chad Harrison

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1. A Branch from Jesse

Isaiah 11:1-2

**Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot—
yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root.**

**² And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.**

This passage of Scripture is known as a messianic text. That is, it points and refers to Jesus, God's promised Messiah. The old testament (old root) and new testament (new Branch) are in view here. We see the priority and importance of the Holy Spirit which came in power in the kickoff of His earthly ministry and again at the end when He promised to send the counselor after Jesus ascended. Of the counselor Christ said it will be better I should leave so that the Spirit who will dwell within might descend upon us. Jesus would possess in full measure wisdom, understanding, counsel, the power of God and the knowledge of right thinking about Him. Perhaps a missing gem here is verse three as it tells of what would sum up the witness if we love the Lord Jesus, that we delight in obeying the Lord. Listening and responding to the Word, which became flesh and made His house among us, equals loving Jesus.

Prayer

Sweet Jesus, as we navigate yet another season of remembering the beginning, that is, God with us, let us reflect on the greatest gift ever, our debt paid once for all. Also, that we might consider the cost you paid to bring us back into right relationship with the Father. You are worthy of our everything and all the fruit we might bear in the form of souls introduced to your gift and love. Worthy are you the Lamb, seated on the throne. Amen and so let it be....

Thoughts by the Copeland family

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2. He became poor

2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

"Jesus, Son of God. The Darling of Heaven Crucified - Worthy is the Lamb" - the first time I saw these words on the screen to sing the worship song, they took me to my knees. It was nearly 20 years ago and I had recently had my first child. This beautiful, sweet, innocent baby. She was my darling. Being the first grandchild on both sides, she was the darling of our entire family. She was held in such high regard. She was so very precious to each one of us (and still is of course). I deeply related to those words - "Darling of Heaven." I knew what it meant to value and treasure someone. But it was that next word that took me to my knees - "Crucified." In that moment, the picture of the Cross was changed forever for me. I knew that God had given "His only begotten Son." I knew that it was an incredible sacrifice. I knew that it was a demonstration of an unbelievable Love that our human minds can't even fully comprehend, but it was in this moment that I was experiencing a deeper weight of that Truth. Heaven gave up it's Darling. Our Heavenly Father gave to us His precious and innocent Son. And that innocent Son, gave up His place of Honor for us. That Son was moved with Love and Compassion to save us from our position of poverty and make us rich.

What an incredible blessing! While I fully believe in God's blessings in every area of our lives, I know that God is more concerned with the condition of our spirits than the condition of our bank accounts. This reminds me of the scripture, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" - Matthew 5:13. I remember reading it so many times before understanding what it meant to be poor in spirit. I remember thinking, aren't we supposed to be rich in spirit? Aren't we supposed to be fervent in our prayer lives and in our good works? Wouldn't that be what makes us blessed? But one day I was reading that verse again and the Lord revealed to me that being poor in spirit meant recognizing that I have a need.

All believers have accepted the gift of righteousness because it came with the package of turning to God and acknowledging that Jesus paid for their sins on the cross, but I for one, stored away the gift of righteousness and instead tried to earn it on my own for many many years. In my mind, I was doing such a good job, "doing" so many good things, that I didn't even know I had a need. It wasn't until about 10 years ago when I went through a really dark and trying time in my life, both physically and

emotionally, that I realized I had a need. I physically and emotionally couldn't "do" all the good I had successfully been able to do my whole Christian Life up to that point.

This experience made me realize I had a need for righteousness. I couldn't supply it in my own strength because I had no more strength of my own. I literally couldn't get out of the bed or off of the floor long enough to "do" anything good. I was worthless. And I believed that. Because my whole foundation of "holiness" had been built on "doing" and serving God and others. Since I no longer could do and serve, I believed I was worthless. I believed I had no value to God or people. I believed this because this had become my definition. This definition worked well as long as I could keep doing and striving to do more and more, and build accomplishments that I thought were making me holier and holier. But that all shattered when I couldn't "do" anything at all.

I finally recognized I had a need. The first real need in my life since realizing my need for a Savior as a small child. Recognizing this need for righteousness is when I became "poor in spirit." I had the need to be righteous and holy and worth something, having value in some way other than by what I "do" because at that point I couldn't "do" anything. And it was at that point that I received the true and unearned gift of righteousness. It is the greatest gift of all. The truth of knowing that the Darling of Heaven, stooped down, became poor, gave His life for me and for you, so that we can be rich in His righteousness alone, is truly the greatest gift we can receive and be thankful for this advent season. Thank You Jesus!

Prayer

Heavenly Father God,

Thank You for loving me right where I am today. Thank you for not requiring my riches to make me acceptable in Your sight, but for giving up your riches in order to make me righteous. I recognize that Your righteousness is not something I earn, but something I receive freely, and today I receive it fully. I give You all the glory! Thank You for the incredible gift of Your Son, The Darling of Heaven. Worthy is the Lamb! Amen.

Angel Moore

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3. Two Seeds

Genesis 3:15

**And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.**

As we enter the season of Advent, we reflect on the anticipation of Christ's birth and the hope He brings to a broken world. The promise of that hope, however, was made long before Jesus appeared in a manger. In Genesis 3:15, God speaks to the serpent after humanity's fall into sin, declaring a victory that would come through the seed of the woman.

This verse, often called the *protoevangelium* (the first gospel), foreshadows the battle between good and evil. It promises that though evil will strike, the ultimate victory will belong to the offspring of the woman. This is a reference to Jesus, who, though He would suffer (the striking of His heel), would crush the serpent's head once and for all through His death and resurrection.

As we prepare for Christmas, we remember that Advent is not just about the birth of a baby in Bethlehem, but about the fulfillment of God's ancient promise to defeat sin and death. This promise began in Genesis, and it is realized in Christ, the true "offspring" who brings peace and restoration.

In this Advent season, let us reflect on the hope of this first promise—God's unwavering commitment to save His people. The struggle is real, but the victory is assured. Christ has come, and He will come again to fully restore all things.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for the hope that began in the Garden of Eden and was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. As we await His return, help us to live in the assurance of His victory over sin and death. May this Advent season deepen our anticipation of His coming and strengthen our faith in Your promises. Amen.

Jonathan Tuttle

(Not everyone turned in their assignment. Capt. Tuttle MD does not attend LCC. He was an imaginary character on the old TV show M*A*S*H. This devotion was actually created by AI, the platform Chat GPT, surprisingly good)

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4. Like His Brothers

Heb 2:17

For *this reason* he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of *the people*.

What is “*this reason*”? Who are “*the people*”?

Step back a verse to 2:16. It says, “For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants.”

And who are Abraham’s descendants? Thankfully, we ALL are, and we ALL share at least one thing in common: a strong desire to be known and understood. In our personal walk, it has been *much* easier to connect with those that have had or are currently engaged in common experiences. These sharing moments invariably provide a foundation that can, if we act, lead to more conversations and to a deeper relationship. Because of this shared understanding, we can also trust that this person knows our common struggles and that we will become advocates for one another.

But with Jesus, there is a BIG difference. By being fully God, he has the position and authority to be our high priest. He not only advocates for us but He is the only one with the power to atone for the full sins of His people. He shows us mercy.

At Jesus’ birth, by becoming fully human, He begins the process of living a life that entails the experiences and emotions we all go through. He knows what it is to suffer and to be tempted. He provides an example for us, and He will help us in those same situations. He wants us to share our own stories and our own experiences with those that are in similar situations so that we, through Him, can be that connection and advocate. That, in our opinion, is “the reason”. And we love our “people”.

Prayer *“Dear Lord, you are an astonishing and ever-loving high priest, one that loyally took on a role just to reach us, teach us, and save us. We acknowledge that we are unworthy of this care but worship you as a Savior, born as a man, that provides a brilliant illustration of love, forgiveness, and merciful relationship. In your name we pray a prayer of gratitude. Amen.”*

Respectfully,

Kenny and Suzanne Walz

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5. The Virgin shall conceive

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Long before Jesus arrived in Bethlehem there was a prophecy that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. There are many reasons that the virgin conception of our Lord was necessary, but here Isaiah says it will be a *sign*. This gave the people of that day a hope, something to look for. Their longing for relief would be found in God's own Son and he would be called Immanuel. This name means God with us.

Our hope today looks forward to his second coming when we will be with him, not just spiritually, but in all ways, face to face. That sort of hope can keep us going through the struggles of this life.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, let us feel your presence this season, assuring us in our present situation, but also pulling us forward with hope to that ultimate reunion with you. "O Come, O Come Immanuel."

Marla and Randy Newman

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6. "How can this be?"

Luke 1:35

And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

"How can this be?"

Luke 1:35 says, "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God'".

Have you ever said, "How can this be?" As I think about Mary, I ponder her thoughts at this moment. God is looking for ordinary people that are willing to be humble servants. In my life, I have often said "How can this be?" When that happens I seek God and the Holy Spirit consume my thoughts. Just as God prepared Mary, He prepares you daily. What is He preparing you for in this season of life?

Prayer

Dear Lord,

Let the Holy Spirit be so real in my life that I feel it like a cool winter wind against my face. Prepare me as you prepare Mary. Guide me to share my story of "Can you believe!"

Jeanne Morgan

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7. The Lord's servant

Luke 1:38

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

In this scripture there are similarities between God's work in Mary's life and the work in every believer. Jesus lives within the believer spiritually, as He did in Mary physically. He lives within the believer by His word and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is made visible to the world through us. We are His hands and feet. We serve others through acts of kindness, prayer and sharing His love by putting others needs before our own. When we put others first, we don't need recognition or praise because all praise and glory belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ. The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. Mark 10:45.

Prayer- *Father, help me to serve others with love and compassion. Help me to see the needs around me and give my time unselfishly for Your glory. To God be the Glory.*

Diane Herron

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8. Mary's Song

Luke 1:46-49

⁴⁶ And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.

A song of praise, a song of worship, and a song of gratitude. What a beautiful way to talk to God. Mary clearly loved God with all of her heart. The word of God says "HE looks upon our heart". He knew she was a willing servant. She also feared him as God in all of his sovereignty.

Through her song she knew the ancient scripture. She spoke of Abraham, and God's servant Israel. She knew that the baby in her womb was the one promised from God to deliver Israel, God's mercy revealed in her womb.

Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us.

Are we as willing servants? I pray my heart reveals to God that I am.

Tina Hosey

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9. Christmas is hard

Luke 2:1-5

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

The celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ is always a high point on everyone's calendar, as it should be. In our minds, though, I think we have cleansed, sanitized and deodorized the first Christmas so that it hardly resembles what really happened. Let's try to imagine ourselves alongside Joseph, Mary, and even Jesus as they made the journey to the Nativity.

That first Christmas was difficult because the Jewish people living in Palestine were under harsh rule by the Roman occupiers. If the rulers said you had to pay a new tax, and you had to make a week-long journey on foot to register, then *you had to do it*.

Also, it was also a very difficult time for Joseph and Mary in particular. They knew her child was from God, but their neighbors and families may not have believed them. People may have gossiped and treated them badly for being pregnant while they were almost-but-not-quite-married-yet. Mary may have had to go on the long, difficult journey with Joseph to get away from all the talk in Nazareth.

And here's the really foul thing: Mary had to give birth in some sort of barn or stable where the animals were kept. You probably have a manger scene at Christmas to remember this fact. But the *real* manger scene was probably dirty, germy, and smelled like manure! This was *not* the most beautiful place for the Son of God to be born into the world. Someday we should personally thank Joseph and Mary for all they went through in obedience to God.

What about the first Christmas from Jesus' own perspective? You may think that since he was just a newborn baby that he really didn't know what was going on around him. But remember, before he came in the flesh as a baby he was also the eternal Son of God in heaven, with the Father and the Spirit. For Jesus it was a journey *down* from perfect heaven to smelly earth.

Philippians 2:5-8. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, *being born in the likeness of men.* And being found in human form, *he humbled himself* by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

For Jesus, it wasn't just the stinky stable of his birth, but he also had to experience being hot, sweaty, tired, thirsty, hungry and lonely. At the end he experienced the ultimate disgusting, dirty job of carrying my sin and your sin on the cross so that we could be forgiven and accepted into God's kingdom.

So, when I tend to get grumpy around Christmas because of the crowds and spending and planning and rushing and shopping, when I might want to say, "Christmas stinks," that's when I remember the incredible thing that God has done. I remember the difficult and sometimes smelly journey endured by Mary and Joseph. I ponder the distance that the Son of God *came down*, humbling himself to my earthly level in order to bring me up to his. Then I am able to see the real meaning of Christmas in all its gritty detail.

Prayer

Lord, give us eyes to see the real meaning of the season. Help us to see how the Perfect came down into this very imperfect world. Give us ears to hear the sounds of the cattle in the stable and the sheep in the fields. Give us noses to detect the smells of our own sinful lives, but also the pleasing aroma of the sacrifice that Christ made on our behalf on the cross. This Christmas, let our lives reflect the love that you showed us out into the dark world around us. Amen.

Randy Newman

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10. The Manger

Luke 2:6-7

⁶ So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. ⁷ And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Since Jesus Christ's birth through today, millions upon millions have traveled to Bethlehem to see and pray at the birthplace of Jesus. The Church of the Nativity houses Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox services under one roof built over the birthplace and manger location of Jesus.

In today's me first, self indulgent society, it is inconceivable to many that anything good could come from a manger in a dirty, smelly stable. In God's plan for our salvation, He chose the humble stable and manger in Bethlehem as the birthplace and first bed for His Son, Jesus. Our Savior is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, his humble beginning is a perfect example for us to follow. We must humble ourselves and seek God's guidance for our lives. "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." I Peter

Prayer

Dear Lord,

Help us to humble ourselves before You that we can serve our community to glorify You. Thank you for the wonderful example provided to us by the birth of Jesus in such a humble beginning. During this Advent period, help us illuminate Jesus as the true reason for the holiday season. God ignite in us the desire to serve others in this holiday season and throughout the next year.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen

Bryan Cox

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11. The Word became flesh

John 1:1-2, 14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. . . . ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

I love words! I have loved them since I learned to talk and especially since I learned to read. Words are incredibly important, or should I say how I use my words is incredibly important. Words can be constructive or destructive and are powerful when used in either way. I have the opportunity with every interaction I have with someone else to use my words to build them up or to tear them down.

With just the command of his words, God spoke the world into existence in Genesis. Words are powerful. Then in John the Word to which John refers is Jesus. The Word is important. God created us to be able to speak to one another's hearts through our words followed by our actions. Unlike all the other creatures on earth he created us with the ability to communicate and have meaningful conversations, not just to survive but so that we would thrive. Words can comfort or words can cause pain.

Proverbs 18:21 "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

Because I am a Christian, I am called to reflect Christ and be an example of who He was here on earth. Jesus is the Word that became flesh. When I speak my words, I have to remember that each word I speak is my representation of Jesus and that I want my reflection of Him to be accurate so that others are drawn to Him through my words. Words are the result of what is in my heart so if I want to change the way I speak, I have to change what lives in my heart.

When I think about Jesus being the Word it changes the way I speak which changes the words I say which could change the trajectory of someone else's life. There was a time in my life when I was in a very dark place. There were many people who chose to speak life rather than condemnation over me. Due to those words spoken in love to me, I was able to break free of the chains of sin that had bound me for years and I began a journey of life on earth that I am still on today. I work hard at paying that forward every chance I am given.

When I have the opportunity to use my words, I choose them wisely because I know that with my words, I have the opportunity to change someone's eternity. I want others to know that Jesus is in my heart because He is in my words.

Prayer

Precious Heavenly Father,

Help me remember that the Word was made flesh in order to save me from my sin. Help me to season my words with kindness before I spit them out so that my words may bless others. In this advent season, I pray that I would remember that the hustle and bustle of things here on earth are not the most important thing but rather that the reason for celebration is the Word that became flesh who influences the things that I say as long as I draw near to Him. I pray that Jesus would tumble out of my mouth with every word that I speak. Help me, Lord to choose my words wisely.

Amen

Terri McDonald

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12. The shepherds and angels

Luke 2:8-10

⁸ Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. ¹⁰ Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

When you pick up your Bible, do you ever wonder how old or outdated its stories appear? Do you think about how the scriptures were relevant then but then to your life today? We are all human, and while these thoughts may cross your mind, nothing could be farther from the truth. The scriptures are highly relevant; they may appear different today from the past but are not as different as we think.

Aren't we all shepherds of our lives, tending to what we need to survive? In ancient times, shepherds watched over their flocks in the fields, which can be reflected in our relationships with family, friends, and even those we have yet to meet. Just like the shepherds of old, have you ever been startled awake by the realization that something extraordinary has visited you? You may have experienced an angelic visit in the form of a helping hand or good news. Better yet, a possible actual angelic visit in the flesh.

Have you ever been overwhelmed by the understanding that your struggles seem insignificant compared to the greater good, leaving you in awe? In that moment, you may have realized that what you feared quickly faded away when compared to what you had known, replaced by the joy of understanding God's mercy in a way you never imagined before.

This sense of awe and joy in the 21st century is much like the realization and understanding of God's love, joy, and delight for mankind that was present in ancient times. Outdated? On the contrary, the teachings of God remain timely and relevant, serving as a guiding post for our lives, just as they did back then.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for your timeless message of joy, hope, and renewal and for the realization that your message for us today is the same as it was for those shepherds tending their flock back in the day...

Dean Doudna

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13. A Savior.

Luke 2:11-12

¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

For there is born to you this day:

In the quiet Judean night, under a thousand stars, a proclamation echoed through the hills surrounding Bethlehem. The sky filled with heavenly messengers. These heralds were angels entrusted with announcing the most important event in Earth's history.

On this day, the announcement of Christ's birth- to the shepherds was emphasizing that God chose to reveal the incarnate Son of man for all mankind.

In the City of David:

The name "City of David" originates where Israelite king David conquers Jerusalem, then known as Jebus, from the Jebusites. According to the Hebrew Bible, the name "City of David" was applied to Jerusalem after its conquest by David c. 1000 BCE

A Savior:

Jesus Christ, the Lamb, the only begotten Son of God who was disrobed of His glory; the one who saves from any form of evil; redeemer of sin and saves our soul; sacrificed His life to make amends for our sins; redemption made effective by the power of the Holy Spirit

Savior...Christ...Lord:

These 3 titles together summarize the saving work of Jesus and His sovereign position.

Christ means, "Anointed," referring to Jesus' royal messianic position, a ruler.

Jesus is destined to sit and distribute salvations benefits from God's side, ruling with the Father.

He is the Lord-the deity, the divine being for mankind.

And this will be the sign to you:

This event serves as a clear indication of something important. This is signifying God's presence, power and promise

You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths:

The Babe (the incarnation of Christ) was birthed as representation of an ordinary human being, the seed of David. Being wrapped, swaddling was a common practice to keep them secure as in the womb, and protected. The swaddling cloths represent vulnerability and dependence of a newborn emphasizing Jesus' humanity and connection to mankind.

Lying in a Manger:

This sign would distinguish the new born Savior from all others and is highlighting Jesus' humble birth, despite being the Son of God. The manger was planned. The first bed for the Son of God was not a royal cradle. It was a common corn crib. Luke highlights the manger not only to underscore Jesus' humble beginnings, but also to foreshadow the Last Supper when the Messiah would perform a symbolic act in offering His body as food for those who follow Him.

Prayer***Heavenly Father***

Let us humbly come to You in the name of Your only begotten Son, Jesus,

Praising you and thanking You for that miraculous day, the birth of Your Son.

You choose to step out of your Shekinah glory and walk this earth so we may have life and life abundant.

LORD you gave us the day that man would be saved from Your wrath due to our fleshly sin nature.

Since Jesus' birth, if we humble ourselves as Christ was humbled, we have a choice; a choice of Your love, a choice of restoration, a choice of freedom, and a choice of power of Your Holy Spirit, and an eternity with you in heaven.

Let us praise You and thank You for Your mercy. On this day you wrapped your loving kindness, mercy and grace to all humanity.

For this we are eternally grateful.

It is in Jesus precious name we pray.

Amen

Sandie Duck

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14. Glory to God

Luke 2:13-14

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

**¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"**

What must it have been like for those Shepherds watching over their flocks the night of our Savior's birth...to have the dark, calm, starry night lit up with a bright messenger angel speaking to them the most exciting News in human history!

And then, while still being amazed at the one angel's message, an army of angels appears, joining the first angel, to further announce the Good News, to celebrate God's Glory, Peace, and Good Will toward mankind, with a Savior.

From the delivery of that message, those Shepherds were compelled to go and see where the Savior was, and honor Him. And then make known to others the marvel of what they had seen. Let us continue to honor Him today, and His Salvation in our lives.

Prayer

'Dear Heavenly Father, I pray that as we reflect on the way the Good News of our Savior's birth was first announced, that we be compelled to share the presence of Jesus as our Savior, like those Shepherds did, to the world around us, that He might be their Savior also. And that we might glorify You as ambassadors of your Peace and Goodwill. Amen.'

Diane Harris

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15. The Wise Rejoice

Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." ...

⁹ When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. ¹¹ And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

We know The Savior has come. Rejoice and Worship

When I sat down and studied this verse it spoke to me of a great joy the Magi must have believed they would find when following the Bright star.

The Wise Men had faith they would find the child born King of the Jews and they wanted to worship him.

How many people are searching for a sign? Am I using each day I'm given to be a bright star? Am I asking God to help me guide others to him?

I will worship and rejoice because I have seen the light and I will follow Him; the King of Kings.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your Son. I pray I ask these questions of myself each day. I pray I seek out your light and show a faith and trust that shines out your Joy in me everyday. I want to be more like the Wise Men and seek you out to worship you! In Jesus' holy name, Amen.

Charissa Reynolds

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16. Old Simeon

Luke 2:25-32

²⁵ And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸ he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

²⁹ "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;

³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation

³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

³² A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel."

Luke 2:25-32

Simeon being a just and devout man, was led by the Holy Spirit. He was committed to God, lived in consciousness of His presence, and walked with Him daily. He believed, as the Holy Spirit had told him, that the Messiah (Jesus Christ) would come to bring consolation to God's people, and that he would not see death before he had seen Christ. So this Advent and Christmas season let us do as Simeon did and let the Holy Spirit lead us to focus on God's precious gift, His Son and our Savior Jesus Christ, as we celebrate his birth.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus. I want to give you thanks for the precious gift of your Son. Without Him we have no hope, but because you love us and did this we have hope through Him. In Jesus name Amen

Brother Clyde Alison

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17. A painful prophecy

Luke 2:33-35

³³ **And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him.** ³⁴ **Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against"** ³⁵ **(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."**

Simon, a holy man, confirmed what God had revealed to Joseph and Mary that Jesus was the Son of God. Also he said a sword would pierce thru their souls (referring to Jesus being crucified on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven and we could be with God in heaven. I am so thankful for Jesus dying on the cross and rising on the third day so our sins can be forgiven.

Prayer *Dear Father, thank you for sending your only Son, Jesus, to cleanse us and save us so we can join You in heaven. Thanks also to Jesus for sending the Holy Spirit to abide in our hearts and have fellowship with Him and we can draw close to Him and do His will.*

Sarah Starzer

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18. Old Anna

Luke 2:36-38

³⁶ Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; ³⁷ and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. ³⁸ And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Prophetess Anna (from the tribe of Asher) can be seen as a picture of O.T. Israel: 12 tribes times 7 which represents completion in GOD'S divine plan, equals 84 years of her praying for the consolation of Israel. And as we apply her example to our walk today, we see that the LORD desires to use us no matter our age. The more we draw near the more HE draws near to give us spiritual insight (James 4:8). And, with us who have been redeemed by the blood of our Savior, HE gives opportunity to share HIS Love to others just as Anna had a passion for doing.

Prayer

Dear Holy Father, As you continue to speak your Truth we are reminded to see that you are smiling down upon us, and at the same time we are reminded of your warnings to us. YOU move in special ways to those who humble themselves before you. As we look at the words you have given us in Prophetess Anna's example, we pray that we choose discipline as she did, that we be a child solely after YOUR ways. Through JESUS CHRIST Holy Name we pray. A-men

Sister Audrey Alison

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19. Forerunner of the Messiah

Matthew 3:1-3

¹ In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ² and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" ³ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the LORD;

Make His paths straight.' "

The message and mission of John the Baptist was and is an urgent and radical call to repent. The biblical definitions of repent is "turn", "return", and more correctly, "to turn from evil, and to turn to the good." John the Baptist was speaking to a society in moral decay and spiritual apathy, perhaps a lot like our world today; people of compromise, even some in the American church.

The Word of God is clear that our very hearts can deceive us (Jer 17:9). If we are not people who seek truth and love truth, we can easily be deceived and led astray (2 Thess 2:10). We have been awakened to this fact in a sobering way the past 4 years. Thus, a need for us to allow God to examine and quicken our hearts and motives daily, and teach us His ways.

Wilderness is defined biblically as a place of testing and preparation for the next step in God's plan for mankind. We are told in the Bible that even Jesus experienced the wilderness. We learn from His wilderness experience that it is an extreme and difficult time of testing. Testing in times of poverty and testing in times of abundance. A test of loyalty and trust; faith.

My earthly father died when I was just one. The youngest of five children, I was introduced to Jesus in my home by my older brother of 10 years. I remember hearing the gospel message, my response, the prayer of salvation. As a little girl, I prayed this over and over at bedtime because I so desperately wanted to be with Jesus. This was the beginning of my hearing a voice deep within. Sometimes it would be a voice of encouragement and love. Sometimes it would be a gentle voice to remember. Other times it would be a voice regarding warning and repentance. The Institutional church was not part of my early years, but Jesus, the Bible and the Fathers voice was a constant. This voice grew more intimate with prayer and study of His WORD. It was constant as I struggled with life, temptation, and my sinful nature. Did I always obey that voice? No.

Early in 2020, during the chaos and confusion of the Covid pandemic, I heard a voice calling in my wilderness. "Be Still and Know I am God", and also a resounding, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near!". At that time, I was busy in ministry,

considered my life Spirit-filled and Spirit-lead; living life for God, family, others, and on purpose. Little did I know, Covid wasn't the only thing calling life to a standstill; most importantly, my Heavenly Father. A divine voice calling me to a season of examination and repentance. Much was unclear; however, I knew without a doubt It was God's voice calling. With many tears and questions, my heart turned to God like never before. I am very thankful I did not turn a deaf ear, but instead stopped to seek truth and listen. Through different eyes and ears, He gave me new revelation and understanding about His ways, His Church, His Kingdom. He formed in me a greater love for Him and His people. Rest came upon me like never before; Peace and Contentment.

"The voice calling" is something I will always need in order to stay on God's path. In our weakness and sinful nature, and sometimes in our greatest attempt, we can fall into deception, off His path and purpose. We can unknowingly be led astray and into error. Life is a wilderness full of temptations and testing. "A voice calling out in the wilderness," is divine direction for our good and His glory. "As it has been said: "Today, if You hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion" (Hebrew 3:15).

Do you hear a voice calling in the wilderness?

What is He speaking to you?

How will you respond?

Prayer

Father, we praise you, for you are the same yesterday, today, and forever. You came to rescue that which is lost. You are the only voice of Truth calling out in the wilderness of life. Thank you for your love, mercy and grace. Thank you for your relentless pursuit of us. Give us ears to hear and hearts to obey and follow you every season of life.

Wendy Rajan

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20. The Lamb of God

John 1:29-30

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'

Breakdown:

John sees Jesus approaching him. He then acknowledges who he is and the role he has over us as the lamb of God ; the one who takes away our sins . John then told the overhearers " A man who comes after me surpasses me because he was before me."

Meaning to me:

Before Christ I was dead ; no life in me. Only through Christ I was reborn.

Prayer

Father God, I pray that you reveal yourself to us. So that we may draw closer to you Lord. So that we may receive your word and use that to fulfil your will . I pray you strengthen us throughout our journeys, Lord. In your son's precious name of Jesus, Amen.

Daniel Bratton

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21. God sent forth His Son

Galatians 4:4-5

⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Timing is everything the saying goes. Often in my life the timing just isn't right, I'm impatient, and God doesn't answer immediately. But God always shows up and shows off at just the right time. The greatest of His appearances will forever be when He stepped down from the throne room of Heaven to take on our humanity so that we could have a way back from our utter depravity into His loving arms.

Not just to buy us out of that depravity but the text says that we might receive adoption to sonship. Are you kidding me God? Not only did I, do I, often reject and disappoint you and you meet me with the greatest gift ever, adoption!

Response: So what could I say? And what could I do? But offer this heart, Oh God, completely to You. I'll stand with arms high and heart abandoned, in awe of the One who gave it all. I'll stand my soul Lord to You surrendered, all I am is Yours.....

Prayer: *Jesus, understanding who You are and who You made me to be, I'll simply say, Thanks God for choosing me.*

Thoughts by the Copeland family

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22. No condemnation!

Romans 8:1-3

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh . . .

One of our favorite television shows through the years has been *Law and Order*. If you are unfamiliar, the plot is always the same: horrible crime, a police investigation, and then prosecuting District Attorney tries the case before a jury. The end of the episode always ends with a dramatic verdict, "Guilty" or "Not Guilty."

Romans 8:1 has always been one of my favorite verses. "There is therefore now *no condemnation* to those who are in Christ Jesus." Because of my own sins I should stand before the judge and be declared guilty. Because *I am* guilty. But God, because of his unimaginable love, sent His only Son as a baby in Bethlehem. This baby grew to a man so he could fulfill the prophecies, be the perfect Israelite, the perfect human. Then, on the cross, the Father heaped all my sin and on him and turned to me and declared decisively, "Not Guilty."

Without Incarnation, Cross, Atonement, Resurrection and Spirit, the manger scene loses its power and significance.

Prayer

Holy Father, thank you for your overwhelming love and amazing grace, that would let you call us "not guilty."

Randy Newman

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23. A New Heaven and Earth

Revelation 21:2-3

² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

As I look forward to the advent of Christmas, when I celebrate and give thanks for Jesus' birthday, God's gift to mankind on earth, I long for His return.

"Hey! Lookey here" as Chad would say for "Behold," the angel says to the shepherd in Luke 2:10, "I bring you good tidings of great joy."

Isaiah 9:6 foretells of the Redeemer, "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, and the government will be upon His shoulder."

Christ Jesus, Himself, says "All authority in heaven and on Earth has been given to Me." (Matthew 28:18)

What a glorious time when all principalities and powers of darkness are overcome by such authority and God Tabernacles, fully, with mankind.

Prayer

Thank you dear Jesus Christ for overcoming death and giving me your Holy Spirit. Please help me to make my every action and each word I speak to be a deliberate choice to further Your kingdom.

Heidi Linebach

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24. The Gift!

2 Corinthians 9:15

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

As I study this verse, I am overwhelmed with the love and generosity of God. I am reminded of the greatest gift I have ever received.

While we often associate gifts with materialistic articles, the gift of Jesus Christ exceeds more than I could ever want or need. It's the gift of salvation and everlasting life. This ultimate gift is intimate and personalized just for me. The gift of salvation highlights the depth of God's generosity to each and every one of us.

This verse reminds me of when my babies were little. They had no money for gifts or cards, but always gave the best of the best. Whether it be a homemade card or statue made of random materials laying around the house, these gifts would not compare to anything that could be bought in the store. The kids would put in their best work to ensure their love and appreciation shined through their homemade gift that was personalized just for me. Just as the kids' gifts, God gave his very best to express his love for us. Salvation can't be purchased in a store and it is personalized with us in mind. There is nothing greater than the gift of salvation!

For this season of giving, I will carry this bible verse with me--a constant reminder of the greatest gift that I have ever and will ever receive. To express my gratitude, I pray to reflect God's kindness to others this season.

Prayer

Dear Father, thank you for the gift of your son Jesus! May you shine through me and help me show the same love and goodness you have given me to all who I encounter. Guide and teach me to share this gift with others so they too can experience the ultimate gift of salvation and eternal life. In Jesus Name, Amen!

Breanna Geer

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25. God's Love

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The word of God is the heart of God. It is the seed that brings a great harvest when planted in good soil. Our hearts become the good soil when we grasp how much our Father loves us by sending Jesus to be the sacrifice for our sins so that we can be with Him for eternity.

For those of us who have children, grandchildren, and even great grandchildren, we would never want any harm to those we love the most. It is a sacrifice that few, if anyone, would make. But we mean so much to our Father in heaven, that He wanted us to be saved, not condemned through the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus. When I meditate on this, what a comfort and craving for the presence of our Lord is stirred in my soul!

Prayer

Father, thank you for your goodness and mercy! Watching your Son be tortured on that day would have been heartbreaking! Jesus, thank you for your sacrifice. It brings sorrow to think of the excruciating pain you endured for me but great joy knowing how much you love me! Holy Spirit, thank you for bringing peace, joy, and even conviction when needed so that my heart is pleasing to you. Please continue to guide me in your wisdom, understanding and revelation. Thank you for wrapping us all in your blanket of love!

Help us both individually and collectively to show your love to others so that those you have called see your glory and goodness! We are so grateful for your presence and desire to let your love shine through us so that your holy name is praised!

Lisa Andrews

More Scripture Passages for Meditation

Phil 2:5-8

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!

Deuteronomy 18:17-18

¹⁷ "And the LORD said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.

Micah 5:2

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting."

Isaiah 9:6

⁶ For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Matthew 1:20-21

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

Benediction

Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for allowing me to live and see another one of your grateful and beautiful mornings. Thank you for your mercy and Grace. Hebrews 11:1 says now Faith is a substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen vs 6 without faith it is impossible to please you Father pray that you will increase my faith and give me wisdom and revelation, according to your word may grow and mature in your love in Jesus name I pray amen--**Pastor Jimmy Scales**